THE·CITY

ARTHUR·UPSON

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THE CITY, AND OTHER POEMS

By the same writer —

THE SIGN OF THE HARP

OCTAVES IN AN OXFORD GARDEN
Lettered and illuminated by MARGARETHE HEISSER

WESTWIND SONGS

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THE CITY

A Poem-Drama

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ARTHUR UPSON

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THE CITY

"FOR HE LOOKED FOR A CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS, WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD" . . . . . .

Persons

UCHOMO, *surnamed Abgar, King of Edessa in Mesopotamia.*
CLEONIS, *an Athenian woman, his Queen.*
ANANIAS, *a Chamberlain.*
AGAMEDE.
STILBE.
A PHYSICIAN.
BELARION.
BODY SLAVE *to Abgar.*
A MESSENGER.
SLAVE-BOY.
WOMEN, *companions and attendants of the Queen.*
SOLDIERS.

The scene throughout is an enclosed garden of planes and pomegranates some distance outside Edessa. The river Daisun, with occasional sails, and a winding military road, are seen at intervals in the rolling fields beyond the garden walls. Against the horizon in the left background arise the walls and towers of a Greco-Parthian city. In the middle background there is a massive gate, closed and barred; its hinge posts are termini carven with Janus heads. In the right foreground the portico of a summer palace in the Doric style projects into the scene through a wealth of oleanders. The centre is occupied by a marble dais surmounted by a long semi-circular Greek settle of stone, and banked with luxuriant flowers. Near this, a sun-dial.

The time is in the sixteenth year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, late in the spring.

The action covers a period of one day from dawn to dark.

I. DAWN

A group of the Queen's women attired in flowing white pepli, one bearing a lyre, some sitting, some leaning against pillars of the portico. Soft music. They sing to a slow measure.

CHORUS

OF old it went forth to Euchenor, pronounced of his sire —
Reluctant, impelled by the god's unescapable fire —
To choose for his doom or to perish at home of disease
Or be slain of his foes, among men, where Troy surges down to the seas.

Polyides, the soothsayer, spake it, inflamed by the god.
Of his son whom the fates singled out did he bruit it abroad;
And Euchenor went down to the ships with his armour and men
And straightway, grown dim on the gulf, passed the isles he passed never again.

2

Why weep ye, O women of Corinth? The doom ye
have heard
Is it strange to your ears that ye make it so mournful a
word?
Is he who so fair in your eyes to his manhood
upgrew
Alone in his doom of pale death — are of mortals the
beaten so few?

O weep not, companions and lovers! Turn back to
your joys:
The defeat was not his which he chose, nor the victory
Troy's.
Him a conqueror, beauteous in youth, o'er the flood his
fleet brought,
And the swift spear of Paris that slew completed the
conquest he sought.

Not the falling proclaims the defeat, but the place of
the fall;
And the fate that decrees and the god that impels
through it all

Regard not blind mortals' divisions of slayer and slain,
But invisible glories dispense wide over the war-gleaming plain. [*Enter* AGAMEDE *in the portico.*

AGAMEDE

Go, gentle sisters, and sweet rest be yours.
Ere noon comes hither Abgar's embassy
From the great Healer in Jerusalem.
Get what repose ye may, for Ananias
Hath sent his courier to our waiting Queen
Begging some converse here with her, and we
Doubtless shall then be needed.

STILBE (*stepping from amongst the women*)
Abgar sleeps?

AGAMEDE

Like a tired boy. Cleonis also rests,
And the old doctor in his ante-room.
The Queen commands me thank her faithful ones
Who all night long this slumber have implored
For Abgar's couch with lulling of their song.

4

STILBE

Is this the morning? I began to think
That, like Persephone, we, too, perchance
Might have transgressed in this half-yearlong night,
Green pomegranates being irresistible
And the only cheer the dark earth offered us.
Pluto provided ripe ones for his guest.

AGAMEDE

Yonder the city's waking. Eunoë,
Straight to thy bed. Dear child, thy blossom head
Hangs heavy as the dewiest poppy! Thou,
Erigone, whose lyre hath brought the morn,
And little Nyseis of the silver voice,
Speed now while slumber broods above these halls
And even Abgar sleeps.
Thee, Stilbe, yet
Would I detain a space. Some things there are
Befitting us alone as nearest her
And tenderest in her love to weigh together
Of our Cleonis. [*Exeunt Women, except* STILBE.

STILBE (*coldly*)

You, being cousin to her,
Have preference in her intimacy. Much,
Therefore, I'm honoured by your interview.
Pray, madam, first, whose song was that we sang
The last ere you dismissed us?

AGAMEDE

Abgar's song;
Thou knowest he made it in the garden here.

STILBE

I had forgot Cleonis sings but love.

AGAMEDE

Yea, and a love the dream of which men die for!

STILBE

And the life of which, I see, they sicken of.
The fighter for me, and songs of sounding war!

[*A pause.*

AGAMEDE

Glaucon, my husband, died to save his king;
Yonder, amid the blossoms, lies entombed
Our little child, our little Charmides.
O gods! take not away my joy in her,
This fair-faced creature I had learnt to love!
Stilbe, thou hast seemed like a fresher self
To me a widow and bereft of youth
In whom so many hopes have been consumed.
My little sister left in Argolis
Must now be tall as thou, a woman grown.
[*Confronting her.*]
Tell me, loved Stilbe, what hath stung thy heart
That, since our summons, thy sweet lips so oft
Speak bitterly?

STILBE

Stale sweetness oft turns bitter.

AGAMEDE

Thou art so fair! Yet many a wingéd thrust
At our sad, gentle Queen I hear of thee.

Oh, hadst thou earlier from Edessa come
To stand beside her through this lingering grief
Thou, too, wouldst curb the quick scorn of the world!

STILBE

Thrice o'er these marbled pools the moon hath filled
Since Uchomo she lured to dwell off here
While Ananias trudges to Judæa
For Galilean charms. The very pause
She claps upon our city gaiety
Cries out against her. With the king fled hither
The town is like a tomb dead-garlanded.
I, who this selfsame week was to have wed,
Am like to die a virgin, being called —
The maidens decked, as one might almost say,
And the libation poised above the altar —
Called with new relays to attend her spouse
And sing these dull songs to him evermore.
Belarion, too, our nuptial rites delayed,
Grows angry in his speech.

AGAMEDE

Then thou hast speech
With him? 'Tis of Belarion I would warn thee
As one who hates the Queen and would rejoice
To see the end of this long dynasty.
How gains he access to thee, and for what?

STILBE

He is a man of promise. Heard you not
What the oracle declared?

AGAMEDE (*after a pause*)

Who is this woman?
Not she who suckled at the same fond breast,
Sicilian Praxinoë's, with her
She rails on now — bred up in watchful care
Her foster-sister in Athenian halls!

STILBE

Milk is not blood; and even blood will chill
Before a thwarted love — such love as mine!

AGAMEDE

Such love as thine? Why, girl, thou'rt mad! Dost
dream
That ever love hath sprung from such a soul?
[STILBE *laughs scornfully.*
Ah! The old tale — that thou wast courted first
When Uchomo to Athens came. Why, that
Belongs among the old forgotten things.

STILBE (*starting away*)

Oh, some remember still. Yea, even yet
This royal pair among the oleanders
Shall well remember! [AGAMEDE *follows her.*
Do not follow me.
I, too, have biddings. Follow not, I say!
I'll cry and start Edessa's dreamer up
Where he lies dozing in her arms! I'll shriek!

AGAMEDE (*in a low voice as they move into the trees*)

Poor, blighted flower! What thou revealest me

Confirms injurious whispers round thy name
Of poisonous growths about thee, poisoning thee.
I will know all. I will not leave thy side
Till the last shred thou dost confess to me.

[*Exeunt among the trees.*

II. MORNING

Four hours later.

The PHYSICIAN *is discovered near the sun-dial, nervously pacing a short distance to and fro.*

Enter ANANIAS *with attendants, from the gate which is swung open for him by guards.*

PHYSICIAN (*starting towards him*)

At last! Thrice welcome home, Lord Ananias!

ANANIAS

I greet thee. Pray, call not Cleonis yet;
My courier told me of her weariness.
Sit here. How hath the King done in mine absence?

[*He hands the* PHYSICIAN *to a place on the settle and remains standing. During the following he paces slowly and firmly to and fro before the dais, pausing occasionally with military abruptness.*

PHYSICIAN

I scarce had hoped myself to have the honour
Of your advices. The Asklepiad
Came not along?

ANANIAS

How doth my lord the King?
He hath not rashly left this healing place?
Be brief. How is his fever, sir?

PHYSICIAN

My lord,
Last night I deemed his fever slower, stole
Forth for an hour to offer up to Paion
Such rites as the old, pious world pronounced
For his disease, and left him soothed in sleep —
Or so he seemed — the Attic women singing
Hygeia's hymn, with pæans to the god;
And she, Cleonis, by his couch. — Ah, sir,
She hath not left his side this many a week,
But they together wander all the day

About these gardens or within the palace;
And nights she lays her down beside his bed
Upon her ready pallet, not content
To let sweet slumber steal her cares away
Till first she see him peaceful. Like a child
Is she for the mild beauty of her love.

ANANIAS

I ask for news. Pray, sir, how is the King?

PHYSICIAN

I left him with a sleeper's pulse, moist-lipped;
The low lamp softly shining, at his head
His faithful Karamanian, on his breast
The Queen's light hand that gently rose and fell
With his deep breaths, and all the medicines
Of my prognosis ranged conveniently; —
For, though I follow Erasistratos,
That learned doctor at Seleukos' court,
Our art's chief glory, in him I love less

What Hippokrates and the school of Kos
Instilled, and rather take his slant to Knidos:
Each humour of the four three changes hath,
And each degree of change hath its own drugs.

ANANIAS

Great Zeus! I had not guessed that so profound
My question was!

PHYSICIAN

In due course, Chamberlain.
I, anxious, on returning through the halls
Hearing clear voices from the royal chamber,
Sped thither. — One brief hour away, so long
As might suffice to lay fresh myrrh and vervain,
From Epidaurus which Cleonis hath
For healing rituals, on Apollo's shrine. —
Found him, despite all previous reproofs,
Risen from rest and pacing round his floor
Dressed as for journeys, girded with his blade.
The Queen, who calmlier looked, sat meekly by,

And I did overhear much feverish talk
Of dreams and sloth, and work and war; and, last,
I made it clear he sudden had resolved
No longer here within this wholesome house
To tarry, but so soon as you, my lord,
Your grateful presence should again bestow
Upon this troubled realm, he would return
With all the court unto Edessa.

ANANIAS

Well,
What more heardst thou a-listening?

PHYSICIAN

Only what
One may while in surprise held hesitant.
He spoke of these two months awaiting you
And this Jerusalem thaumaturgus whom
Strangely he sets much hope on; but in chief
He did reproach himself for idling here
For, "whom the gods will bow must face the gods
With a self yet unbowed," quoth he; "Both selves

Of me are rotting here. What malady
Save sloth consumes both soul and body too?"

ANANIAS

'Twas wisely listened, and remembered well.
Passing the rest, let us arrive at length
To where thou vanquishedst surprise. What then?

PHYSICIAN

I then, with my sick-room authority,
Drew back the arras and appeared to them,
Placed soporific leaves upon the brasier,
Besought Cleonis leave us for her chamber,
And proffered Abgar a composing draught.

What think you? Rather than accept my skill
And the soft dulling ministries of drugs
That bring the body rest, he spurns my hand,
And rising violently on his bed
Commands Cleonis stay and me depart!

I wavered 'twixt two judgments; but I saw
Such glance of anger under his dark brow
I turned and left him in his weakness. Since
All which I have been deep distraught to know
How him I serve, and, I do swear you, love,
I may best bring to reason.

ANANIAS

'Twill be hard.
Exasperation is an angry wound
Thy surgery but inflames, Asklepios.
Keep thou remote from him: there's means for thee.

PHYSICIAN

Thank you, my lord! I am rejoiced to find
Your first so like my last deliberation!
It will be best to leave him for a space,
Perhaps until he send for me; and yet
I love him and I would not seem displeased.

Voice of a GUARD

None pass without the royal sign!

Voice of a MESSENGER

Behold it.

[*Enter* MESSENGER, *in haste. Bows and presents despatches to* ANANIAS.

MESSENGER

These from the prefect Mithradates — beg
Instant reply.

ANANIAS (*Reads. Takes stylus and tablet from girdle and writes hurriedly*)

To Mithradates this.

[*Exit* MESSENGER.

Here's service for you if you love our lord:
Read over this despatch and make it yours;

[*Writes. He gives the* PHYSICIAN *the* MESSENGER'S *despatch.*

Then to the city post, seek out these men,
Both veterans in the service of this house
And scarred in old campaigns against its foes.
Speak with them privily. Antigonus
Will summon guards, and John the Magistrate
Suppress the public brawl with sterner force
Than this seal's lack would warrant him.

[*He seals with a ring two packets, and gives them to the* PHYSICIAN.

PHYSICIAN

This hour
Doth Abgar with Cleonis haunt this spot.
You'll meet him here, my lord; 'tis better so.
His humour is more genial in the air
For taking news of ill. Commend my love
With an apology to Abgar who,
Knowing the pressure, will condone mine absence.
One thing: Tell him not all at once; but first
Only as darkening probabilities
Assert them, then —

ANANIAS

'Tis sixteen stadia thither,
And thou must seek Antigonus by noon.
Pray, get to horse at once.
The Queen approaches;
She must not know the matter of our speech.

PHYSICIAN

I go. [*Exit.*

[*Enter* CLEONIS *from the portico.*

CLEONIS

Friend!

ANANIAS (*kneeling*)

Lo, I am returned, dear Queen.

CLEONIS (*raising him, smiling sadly*)

What weary journeys we have all been taking!

ANANIAS

I would all had such welcome at the end.

CLEONIS (*seating herself upon the dais*)

These many weeks hath Abgar longed for you
With a deep, earnest longing of the soul.
A brief dull slumber torn from fever's rage
Now binds him; for his nights are tedious.
You have been informed as much but now?

ANANIAS

As much,
But with more rhetoric.

CLEONIS

The poor old leech
Is very learned, but his ministries
Have not availed. I look with perfect hope
Toward the arrival of the Healer. So
Tell me of him, and of your travel, all,
And Uchomo shall straightway learn from me.

ANANIAS

"All" is summed up in this: the thought of him
Whose body's rest I'd give my life to win.

CLEONIS

Your absence lent us pause to measure you:
Your putting by of prejudice, your pure,
Yea, sacrificial friendship. Oft whole days
As he hath paced these prisoning gardens round,
Subduing his proud soul within a frame
Inadequate, that he might bear the long
And well-nigh insupportable delay
Of the great Healer's answer, then of you,
Of your long, tireless vigilance, your strong
Mid-manhood's quiet, unprotesting love,
To me he spake. And once he said, "Of such
I'll build my state when I am whole again;
Or, lacking others like him, base all there!"

ANANIAS

Only the usual grace my service bears
Of an hereditary loyalty
To worth unusual. I served Bar-Abgar;
My father, his. I am a soldier, plain,

And not much given to visions; yet sometimes
For Uchomo there's bred in my regard
A sudden tenderness for that he dreams,
Moving along some higher plane than ours,
And seeks to found our city in his dreams.

CLEONIS

And never will our dull world learn that dreams
Are all that fact hath ever issued from.
But yet you have not spoken of the Healer.
I had dared half-believe that he would come
Prepared to make our palace his abode
As ran our invitation sent by you.
Much did this thought alleviate his pain
While Abgar yearned for that strong being's touch.
Delay suits not his temper, and I fear
The issue. — He but follows you? His train
Could not accommodate them to your haste?

[*A pause. She speaks with growing anxiety.*

How long must we await him?

ANANIAS

O Cleonis,
Forgive that I ne'er learned the courtier's phrase
To sweeten bitter news! Your heart is strong,
Made so in many troubles early borne.

CLEONIS (*smothering her fear*)

Only as it must seem for Uchomo.
I am too weak a woman to bear well
A loved one's pain.

ANANIAS

His pain so much is thine
That 'twill be bravely borne, dear Queen. Know, then,
The Hebrew prophet, called the Nazarene,
Declined Edessa's princely offer.

CLEONIS (*leaning forward in excitement*)

Ah,
Avert such woe, Athena Paionia!

ANANIAS (*approaching her as he speaks, and seating himself at the opposite end of the dais*)

This is the hardest part of all my mission.
Compared to this, those stony Syrian hills
Are smoother than the broad Palmyran road.

I know not of what power that Healer worked,
Nor if he wrought at all the cures they tell,
Having seen his face but once. He had a look
Most kind. I thought of Uchomo's fair brow,
And of the steady light of his deep eyes
When he discourses of his ideal city.

CLEONIS (*meditatively*)

They say he, too, hath powerful enemies.

ANANIAS

From whom the court of Abgar promised refuge.

Jerusalem swarmed. From up and down the kingdom
Thronged the barbarians for their sacrifice.
It seems their god hath rites that once each year

In the mid-spring exact their celebrations;
And I must hit it at the very time
When all their hostels choke, and every hole
Teems with their tribesmen gaunt from hill and plain.
It was most fortunate I had of you
The letter to the lady Berenis.
She, as Tiberius' niece, holds high estate
Amongst the Romans of Jerusalem.
As for the servants of our retinue,
They needs must fare ill, like the pilgrims. Me
She of her generous hospitality
Most courteously those days did entertain
In honour of the Osrhoenic House
Whose latest prince by fair repute she loves
For his just laws and life.
From her I heard
Much of this preaching carpenter who builds
Such wondrous edifice of charity
Amongst those fierce uncharitable Jews,
And something of his marvellous cures, on which
I pressed much question while within her gates.

Berenis, having friends among his school,
Herself a half-disciple, unrevealed
For reasons politic, obtained me one
Philip, a humble Galilean, who
Through the packed alleys entered where he taught
And learned an hour when we more privately
Together might converse. I sought him then,
This Philip guiding me, in Bethany,
A hamlet up an olive-sprinkled hill
Just out the eastern walls. There found we him
Surrounded by the trees and some few friends,
The village gentry whose loved guest he was.

[*Beckons to an attendant and takes a parchment scroll from a casket in the attendant's hand.*

CLEONIS

Tell me of his appearance. What said he?

ANANIAS

He had prepared this scroll and gave it me

With courteous words, yet, as I after thought,
Most singularly free from deference
For one who ranks with artisans. His look
Betrayed no satisfaction with our suit;
Yet he did emanate a grave respect
Which seemed habitual, much as Stoics use,
Yet kinder; and his bearing had more grace
Than any Jew's I ever saw before.

As for his words, I own I scarce recall them,
And have been wondering ever since that I,
Bred at a court and tutored to brave deeds,
Should be so sudden silenced. For I stood
Obedient to unknown authorities
Which spake in eye and tone and every move,
In that his first mild answer of refusal.
He seemed to have foreknowledge of our case; —
Mayhap the Galilean gave him news
Of our perplexity and long delay
In matters urgent to the city's welfare
Which I had hinted of to Berenis.

He looked on me with such compassionate gaze
I had an impulse to renew my plea;
But he, as if he read my inmost mind,
Bade me tell Abgar to contemplate this
[*Indicating the scroll.*
And shortly all should be made clear to him.

CLEONIS

Are *you* he who would yield his life to win
Peace for his tortured master's body? Shame!
Oh, had I gone I would have so besought him,
And stormed him with the passion of my prayers,
That he had never dared refuse me! Love,
Love 'twas you lacked to burn your words in him!
Had you loved Abgar even as duty bids,
Even as your father loved Bar-Abgar when
He made the pilgrimage to Epidaurus
And slept upon the slain goat's skin, and begged
Asklepios' image for his master's life,
And so prevailed; — oh, had you loved one half
As yonder Karamanian slave who stands

All night on guard at Abgar's weary head; —
Or even one little, little part as I
Who, a poor helpless girl, can only stroke
The feverish temples, hold the throbbing wrist —
Oh, you had begged with tears, and he had come
And healed the hidden canker of our lives!

ANANIAS (*arising*)

My love counts not its duties; nor, I think,
Is love summed up in all its victories:
'Tis larger, and includes defeat. In this
All I could do I did, since there was power
Would dumb the boldest suitor. Written here
Is his deliberate determination.

CLEONIS (*arising. Her fingers are strained together*)

I'll go myself and grovel on my knees!
He who hath made the leper whole, hath caused
The blinded eyes to flood with heaven's light,
And, O ye gods! they say restored the dead —

Him shall I travel to by night and day,
And, having found, shall warm so with my tears
That his indifference shall melt away
Like April ice upon Hymettus. Oh!

[*She sinks, weeping, to the seat.*

ANANIAS (*gently*)

Cleonis, I have twice thy years. I know
Both love from hate, and duty from indifference.
'Twas only love for Abgar took me hence
In perilous times; and it was not indifference
Detained the man: a thing to ponder on.

CLEONIS

Show me the way to him, I do command you!

ANANIAS

Your journey to him would be all in vain,
Your prayers and tears in vain, unless, as some

He lived among believe, he was a god
Who may be sought by sorrow anywhere.

CLEONIS

What mean you?

ANANIAS

He is dead.

CLEONIS

So are the gods, then!
Say on.

ANANIAS

Even as I tarried the last day
At the kind house of Berenis, we heard
He was condemned to death. My mission done,
I bade my horsemen make all ready, spurred
Out of the city, and with haste departed.

CLEONIS

What, waited not to search the matter out!
Subsequent haste might well have bought you hours
To learn this master's fate! How then, say you

They killed him? On what charge proved they his guilt?

ANANIAS

That I know not. It seemed a common clamour
For blood — not blood of guilt, but innocence.
Their god must have, it seems, a human victim
Along with the twice seven-score thousand lambs
They slay at each of these strange feasts of theirs.

CLEONIS

What time stayed you within their savage city?

ANANIAS

Three days. My interview was Wednesday. On
The Friday as I left the lady's gate
She with her household gave us company
Unto the open highway, and there called
Afresh on us the favour of the gods
To cheer our long return.
Just down the street
We, not ten paces from the friendly door,

Beheld a noisy rabble that so pressed
The narrowing way, we reined our steeds aside
To wait its passage. 'Twas a dreadful sight:
A criminal condemned by Roman law
To drag the wretched beam he was to die on,
As is the usage towards the baser sort
Who should not stain the honourable sword,
Surrounded by a hateful mob kept off
By the centurions of the procurator.

CLEONIS

What poor, doomed wretch was he? — Oh, 'twas not
— not . . .

ANANIAS

As they drew nearer, from my horse I saw him.
And it was he; but that I only learned
By the loud banter of the bullying crowd.
He had transgressed some law those Hebrews have,
And went to pay for it upon the cross.
As the way widened past the high-walled house
Of Berenis, the throng thinned, and I saw
Plainer the moving figure of the man

And the huge beam laid on him. Suddenly
From the great gate I saw a form dart forth
Straight towards him, pause and seem to have some speech
With the condemned, as, by old privilege,
Sometimes the pious ladies do with those
Who tread the shameful road. Her speech was brief.
She turned, and, as I saw 'twas Berenis,
Towards me she came, and her eyes, wet with tears,
Smiled sadly, and she said these final words:

"Such shame a mighty purpose led him to,
Yet he shrinks not, but steadfast to this end
Inevitable hath he come his way.
A woman of my house was healed of him
By kissing once the border of his garment.
Take your King this, and say that as he dragged
His cruel but chosen cross to his own doom
Some comfort in its cooling web he found,
And left a blessing in its pungent folds."

[*He takes a small square of linen from his bosom.*

A keenly odorous linen from her hand
I laid within my bosom next the scroll.
And so we said farewell, and I spurred on,
The hoarse mob's laughter down the blazing street
Making us glad to quit the fearful city.

[*He gives the linen into the hand of* CLEONIS.

CLEONIS

Oh, let them never leave their quiet hills,
These prophets that dream well for all the world!
Let them remain in mountains far from man
Where nothing fiercer than the lion roams,
Communing with the kindly elements —
The earth that is their mother, and the winds
That are such spirits' brothers, and the fire
Of splendid storms that like their words breaks forth,
And waters that flow out like their great love!
They are of other worlds and strangers here:
Let them remain in mountains — or in gardens!

ANANIAS

Ay, but we need such in this world of men.

CLEONIS

Ye need them as the tiger needeth blood!
Come, show me one great soul that taught you good
Whom your wild world would have; one bold emprise
Without Protesilaus at the prow?

The Carthaginians exiled Hannibal;
The Romans, Scipio; Cicero they stabbed;
Athens gave Socrates the poison cup
Because she feared his truth; Jerusalem
Doth crucify him who would make her whole.

O Ananias, this thy tale for me
Brings ominous forebodings. Pray, beseech
With all your long-used freedom that the King
Go not yet to the city. I have heard
Slight rumours of a restless populace
That, like caged eagles, fight the hand would free,
And look suspiciously on Uchomo.
Is it not true that gathering troubles brood
Within the city?

ANANIAS

Yes.

CLEONIS

I felt it. Now
Give me the whole truth. I've the heart for it.

ANANIAS (*handing her the* MESSENGER'S *despatch*)
This word but now despatched to me tells all.

[*A pause. She reads.*

CLEONIS

'Tis all my fears condensed into a line.
Now must your prayers with mine urge him remain.
Towards evening, at the old accustomed hour,
Here meet us and conclude your narrative
Which I will give to Uchomo complete
Up to the Healer's shameful death; and that
Will I in silence leave till custom dull
The lesser sadness.
Are the guards informed?
Is all precaution taken?

ANANIAS

All is ready;
But I go now to double-warn his watch
Against the morrow. Be not anxious. We
Who long have served this house will prove our love.

[*Exit.*

CLEONIS

Bear with me, Ananias. My heart aches.

III. AFTERNOON

Eight hours later.

The full court is assembled, with ABGAR, CLEONIS, ANANIAS, *and* ATTENDANTS. *Afterwards,* AGAMEDE.

ABGAR *is seated at the end of the stone settle nearest the portico. His right arm rests on the back of the seat, its hand supporting his head. His gaze is fixed upon the distant city, so as to leave discernible only the left side of his face. His soldierly short black hair and strong profile are accentuated by the eager forward thrusting of the neck. A flowing white chlamys is thrown aside from his left shoulder, revealing a severe military dress. The free hand rests upon and clasps the hilt of a sword suspended at the hip.*

CLEONIS *sits full front, a little removed from* ABGAR, *on the settle, her hands folded before her, and her head resting somewhat wearily against the high back of the seat. Her garment is a peplus of azure wool.*

ANANIAS *sits below her on the steps at her right, his gaze directed to* ABGAR. *His attitude, that of interrupted*

narration, presents the right side of his face and form profiled against the oleander leaves. A scroll lies open in his hands.

The SLAVE-BOY *stands in waiting at some distance on the ground to the left of* ABGAR, *immediately behind whom stands his great* BODY SLAVE.

In the middle background, grouped in the foliage, stand the Queen's women in fresh garments of various bright colours.

Armed guards are stationed in the extreme background.

The soft light of advancing dusk fills the garden, but the undulating plain seen through the trees, and the white walls of the city, are suffused with rich sunlight.

Music of lyres. The women are singing.

CHORUS

Ægina's foam is high and wild
Where Pan immortal sits enisled;
But thou and I with flying oar
Seek Psyttaleia's sacred shore.

The City of the Violet Crown
Well knows that rocky island's frown;
But thou and I together learned
What fires upon her altars burned.

Oh, many a sail goes gleaming there
Bound for some olive-garden fair;
But thou and I made fast to her
And found her cypress lovelier.

The shrines of Aphrodite lift
Their smoke in every village-rift;
But thou and I remote from man
Propitiate the woodland Pan.

[*As the song ends,* CLEONIS *waves dismissal to the women.*

ABGAR

More music while I think. Some martial air.
There's one of Alexander's men. Sing that.

CLEONIS (*speaking over-shoulder to the women*)

That song of Arbela.

(*To herself.*)

Unsoothing sound!

CHORUS

I see the Macedonian's foes
Where Zab, the fatal river, flows;
A million, chariot and horse,
And spearmen of the Persian's force

Orontes and the Euxine gave,
The Oxus and the Caspian wave;
Jaxartes, Kashgar, Indus, far
Swell the bright rushing tide of war!

I see the Persian innermost
Of all his vast assembled host,
Around him in protecting groups
Legions of mercenary troops:

Melophori, and Mardian bows,
Albanians, Carians interpose,
With Indian elephants, between
The monarch and his foe unseen.

A score and five the nations are
Preceded by the scythèd car,
And Cappadocia's cavalry
For numbers like the waving sea.

Who comes upon them? O'er the plain
The Macedonian sweeps amain!
I see his phalanx solid-speared. . . .

ABGAR (*arising suddenly*)

'Tis thus a world's won! Alexander led
But two-score thousand men, but them he led!
Ha, how the many-captained Persians ran
Before that godlike youth!

[*He unsheathes his sword and diagrams on the ground.*

Darius' centre,

Bared of the Bactrian cohorts at his left
Who would outflank the slantwise charging right
Of Macedon, exposed both front and side
To Alexander's horse and spearmen. Here
Plunged in that son of Philip, whose assault
Filled the great King with terror, so he fled
Treading his crumbled empire in the dust.

[*He drops to his seat, taking former position.*

Yet Alexander and Darius both
Are dead. And what avail the conqueror
Issus and Arbela? — Do they comfort him
Down there among the shades? What victory
Won Alexander that his naked soul
May deck him with where dwelleth Socrates?

[*A pause. He turns, quietly, addressing* ANANIAS.

Conclude the Hebrew's letter, Ananias.

ANANIAS (*reading*)

"As to the part of your epistle which
Concerns my going hence to visit you,
Know that I have a mission to fulfil

In mine own city, and must here remain
Till all its ends be satisfied. Yet you
Of your infirmity shall know full cure,
And those most dear to you have peace.

"Farewell."

CLEONIS

See, he *doth* promise healing! Reads not more
On any margin, or betwixt the lines,
To indicate how such a joy may be?

ANANIAS

Nay, I have now read every word to you.

CLEONIS (*bending forward*)

Hand me the letter.

[ANANIAS *arises, and gives her the scroll.*

Why, these very lines
We did pass over lightly, they seem charged
With hidden meaning. [*She reads, thoughtfully.*

"Abgar, forasmuch

As ye believed on me whom ye knew not,
Shall happiness be yours. For it is wrote
Concerning me that they should not believe
Who have beheld, that those who dwell afar
And see not might have faith and life abundant."

See you not something there, O Abgar?

ABGAR

Much.

Did I not ask for music, hearing that?

I shall be healed! The ebbing springs of life
Will flow again as full they flowed of yore!
My city, O my city! thou shalt know
Again the joyous tread of other days,
When all thy booths and palaces and shrines
With multitudes of helpless, longing folk
First knew me theirs to build, protect, and love!

I have not yet resolved the Healer's words
Into clear meaning; but their crystal soon
In the still cup of contemplation may

Give up its precious drug to heal our cares.
What said he of it, Ananias? "Shortly
Should all be clear that's written in this scroll"?

ANANIAS

Those are the words, my lord, in giving me
His answer spake the Nazarene.

ABGAR

Consider.
I offered him my realm's protection; peace;
A sanctuary of philosophy;
And a disciple not without an arm. [*A pause.*
Now, more than ever, do I long to see him;
What won my reverence now provokes my love.
His city hates him. Oh, that he were here!
[*He springs to his feet, and paces up and down the dais.*

ANANIAS

I think, my lord, he weighed all this, so firm

His speech revealed him, as if all debate
He, silent, had passed through at once forever.

ABGAR (*eagerly*)

How well thou hast divined this sort of soul!
Planted upon his rock, he sees all else
As drift and wreckage of the stormy seas
That surge around him, yet can touch him not.

There is but one decision for such man,
And, after that, concession, compromise,
Expediency — these enter not at all
Into the fabric of his meditation.
To such death is not. For untainted is
The source of life, and solid is the rock.
To those who go down in the trough upon
Their own poor broken spar, that rock is hid
With him upon it, and they call him dead.
I will send other embassies to him —
Not importuning him, but to have words
To ponder on. Or, maybe, go myself,

For I already feel renewed within
By the great soul of him who hath opposed me.

CLEONIS (*approaching* ABGAR, *and laying her hands in his*)

Uchomo, hast thou all the love for me
That thou didst woo me with those perfect days
Amid the cloves and laurels where the sea
Flung its white arms among Ægina's isles?
Still the old love that bore me in our barque
Far on those sunlit waters where but faint
The cry of men, and even the gleam of sails,
Came to us in our niche among the hills?

Yes, yes, I know! I ask to be assured
By the old light rekindled in thine eyes.

O Uchomo, the constancy of love
Hath not performed its service until pain
Doth weld both hearts inseparably.

Not all

At once to-day did I repeat to thee
Of what our Ananias hath brought back.

ABGAR

I felt that more would come in love's own time.

CLEONIS (*taking the linen from her bosom*)

This brought he back to thee with him. It bears
The dying benediction of the Man.

She who bestows it, lady Berenis,
Invoked his healing power upon its folds.

ABGAR

His city slew him?

CLEONIS

Took away his life!

ABGAR (*receiving the linen*)

Not that! For he shall live forever here,
And in the bosoms of philosophers.
Such life shall grow and blossom, and bear fruit —
Yea, here in mine own city shall it grow!

[*A pause. He turns suddenly, with outspread arms, and uplifted head.*

I feel it now! All through these withered veins
I feel it bound and glow! O life, life, life!

[*He clasps* CLEONIS *in his arms.*

[*Voices at the gate. Enter from thence* AGAMEDE, *exhausted. Her long, white garment of the morning is stained and disarranged, and her grey hair is loose. She walks uncertainly towards the dais.*

[CLEONIS, *in surprise, runs and supports her in her embrace.*

AGAMEDE (*breathless*)

Yet not for this — this even — deem friendship vain,
And sister a light name! — Vow that to me!

CLEONIS

Sweet sister Agamede!

ABGAR (*to Slave-boy*)

Fetch her wine.

[*Boy brings wine, of which* AGAMEDE *partakes.*

(*Lifting his hands to her*)

Be sure of us, dear Agamede! All
Assembled here are bound to thee by love
And thy long, tender years of care for us.
The world is full of beauty, strength, and love!

[CLEONIS *leads* AGAMEDE *to a seat, and sits beside her comfortingly. A pause.*

AGAMEDE (*to* CLEONIS)

What words and looks are these from Uchomo?
Oh, was it all a frightful dream that I
Since dawn this day have fought with Nemesis?

CLEONIS

That was thy dream, dear one.

ABGAR

Some dream this was.

AGAMEDE

Thou splendid youth! What god hath wrought on thee
Whilst I was dreaming? Came he hither, then,
That Galilean Healer long desired?

ABGAR

Thou seest me healed by him. We dream no more.

AGAMEDE (*passing a hand over her eyes*)

Oh, but I dreamt not!

(*Reluctantly*)

Abgar, of thy house
One hath turned traitor and conspired with those
Who long have wished thee ill. More, too, I find,
O King: lords Umbar and Athmantides
Have been beset by the wild populace
And are imprisoned by them in the Tower.

ABGAR

How learn you this?

AGAMEDE

Fresh from those scenes I come.

CLEONIS *and* ABGAR

What! From the city thou?

CLEONIS

What stains are these?
What woe hath overtaken thee?

ABGAR

Spare not.
A great peace dwells in this abode. Not thou,
O wife of Glaucon, canst bring anguish here,
Nor bow our hearts with any woe but thine;
On which, if aught there be, the kingdom shall
Be spent for remedies. Speak slowly all.

AGAMEDE

It is my woe, mine own familiar woe
As I had learned it in forgotten ages.
Two kinds of woe which I had known before
Shall never seem so old a woe as this;
And there is ransom from all other kinds,
When we go back into the earth; but this,
Once known, shall be a terror in the soul
And in Elysium even cloud it o'er
With memories that Lethe cannot quell!

ANANIAS

'Twere well to speak directly of this matter.

AGAMEDE (*to* ABGAR)

Forgive, O Abgar, first, that how and why
I came into the city, or with whom,
I now conceal. Let it suffice that one
I followed fleeing thither who confessed,
In part because I persecuted so,
In part that, sure of their complete design,
The traitors fear not now if it be known.

What I found in the city first I tell:
Of all your officers of public works
Who build and broaden, cleanse and sweep away,
These twain have most incurred the rabble's wrath,
The stewards Umbar and Athmantides;
Because their duties — as chief overseers
Of the new sewers — do seem sacrilege
In that the city's soil so deep is dug
That antique gods of stone, once worshipped there

By the old Syrian fathers of the folk,
Have been disturbed in their forgotten slumbers.
And certain who oppose themselves to all
The strange reforms that are pushed forward so
Have used this pretext of indignant gods
To stir the people and arrest the works.

ABGAR

How comes it Delius lets the mob prevail?
Where is Belarion that such passion rules?

AGAMEDE

Belarion 'tis — I choke to say his name! —
Who stirs them to revenge.

ABGAR

Athmantides
And Umbar have their sovereign's instant care.
My chariot and guard within an hour
Shall bear me to Edessa.
(*To* SLAVE-BOY)
Hasten, boy;

Bid Moschus have the new Arabians combed,
And all prepared for travel in the hour.

[*Exit* SLAVE-BOY.

What! is it thus, my city, whom these dreams
Have glorified with perfectness? And ye,
O people of my ceaseless watch and care,
Could ye not be content a little while
Till my poor body was made sound for you?

CLEONIS (*in pain*)

Uchomo, I forbid thee leave our sight!

ANANIAS

Nay, Abgar, go not!

CLEONIS

Thou wilt straight undo
All the slow betterment of these long weeks.

ANANIAS

My word commands, being given authority.
The seal I bear persuades with eloquence.

ABGAR (*sitting. He looks towards the city*)

I am the King. From my deliberation,
Revolved in silence when the world's asleep,
I am not easy moved by hate or love,
Nor do I rise by impulse to bold deeds;
But it hath ever been my studious care
So ripened for emergency to be
That through my meditations naught can fall
I may not welcome with the fittest deed.

CLEONIS

Yet go not! Oh, thou knowest not!

ANANIAS

Our tongues
Till now were justified in secrecy.
I must inform you, Abgar, that a band
Of impious men who fear nor god nor man
Plot for your life. A treble guard is placed
Around these walls lest any of their spies
Steal to you unperceived; while yonder now
Within the city trusty officers

Under the Prefect Mithradates' eye
Take evidence to blot out that perfidy.

AGAMEDE

For days hath nested 'twixt these garden walls
A withered and implacable Erinys
Ready to give the signal for assault.
It wanted only Ananias' presence
To ripen it, and they intend this night
With all the force Belarion can assemble
To make attack. 'Tis no mere mutiny.
Beginning such, the poison hath been spread
Till now a revolution threatens all.
This flew I back to tell the sentinels
And Ananias' guard which paces here.

CLEONIS (*as though suddenly enlightened*)

Where is Stilbe?

AGAMEDE (*shrinking*)

There is no Stilbe more.

ABGAR (*placing one hand out upon the heads of the two women, who have drawn together, and with the other inviting* ANANIAS *up to a seat beside him*)

Peace, peace! They have but once to see their King
Strong as of old, and riding with his guard!
(*To a* SLAVE)
Ho, Imbros, run to Moschus and make speed
With preparations for departure. Standards,
Torches and all the trappings of the mews
Provide my escort. See all busy. Thou,
(*To his* BODY SLAVE)
Gyges, make ready the new armour — that
Tiberius had forged and sent to me
From Capri. — They will cheer the casque of gold.
[*Exit* SLAVES.
You, faithful friends, and thou, Cleonis, hearken.

[*During the following, the scene gradually darkens till the garden is left entirely in the dusk. Then a few stars shine through the trees, and the moon begins to rise.*

Last night, to complement two wondrous dreams
Had on the two preceding nights, there came
A third, most vivid, and most wonderful.

In the first vision like to this I dreamed:
I stood upon a height. Spread out below,
Dark, silent, shapeless, a vast city — dead —
Where in far ages of this furrowed world
Strong men and women took their taste of life.
All now was desolation absolute;
And through that wreck of fortress, mart and fane,
And fallen mausoleum crowded o'er
With characters for evermore unread,
Only the wind's soft hands went up and down
Scattering the obliterative sands.
I, led in trance by shapes invisible,
Approached a temple's splendid architrave
Half sunk in sod betwixt its columns' bases,
And there by sudden divination read
The deep-cut legend of that awful gate:

APPEASE WITH SACRIFICE THE UNKNOWN POWERS.

Between the roofless, tottering pillars there
A countless flock had fed the holocaust —
Numberless innocents drenched the steaming altars,
Outpouring their propitiative blood.
And prayers and tears and cringings of a world
Through them did seek the appeasing way — in
vain.
And the black night came down upon my dream.

Next night I found me in a twilit place
Wherein the same compelling, gentle hands
Held me. And from mine eminence I saw
A newer city builded on like dust —
A trodden sand that could afford to wait.
Streets hummed, and multitudes on multitudes
Along their river-quays, in highways broad,
Or up their little ramifying lanes,
Unceasing plied their single life away.
They toiled, or played, or fought, or sued the gods,
Absorbed each in his own peculiar lust,
As if there were no morrow watching them;

Yet each was happier in the morrow-dream
Than ever in all achievèd yesterdays.

I was so high above them as to see
Their little deeds and mean anxieties,
Wholly, as one surveys a mound of ants
At their laborious atom industries.
Above them spread the splendid heavens filled
With palpitating sunlight; all around,
The sources inexhaustible of life,
And plenitudes of peace. But there they swarmed,
Striving — some bravely; offering — some in truth;
But all with inward thought and eyes on earth.
And so I saw them grow, and grieve, and die.

And as I looked, I saw a man who long
In upward meditation on his roof
Sat all alone, communing with his soul.
And he arose, and presently went down,
Down in the long black streets among his kind,
And there with patience taught them steadfastly.

But, for the restless souls he made in them,
They turned and slew him and went on their ways.
And a great fog crept up and covered all.

Again the third time I was lifted up.
A mighty, living, beautiful walled town,
A-wave with trees, lay shining on the plain.
And underneath her walls a river glided
Safe bearing her full many a peaceful sail.
And there lived folk who all day worked and sang,
And folk that to and fro sped silently;
And here and there some sat apart and thought.
From all whom throbbed a joy in unison
With the warm earth and her enfolding heavens;
Through all, the strong, perpetual streams of life
That through the universe unceasing flow.
And this dream ended not with cloud or mist,
But slow receded in its radiance
Till it grew small as towers and sails and stream
That whiten yonder to the rising moon.
And as it went I heard a voice that said:

"Thou, Abgar, art the King of cities three:
The Past, the Present, and the Yet-to-Come.
Out of the Past the Present by slow pain
And undiscerning upward agonies;
Out of the Present, by as many throes,
The city of Celestial Harmony."

Then faded all, and I awoke and saw
Through the wide window of my prison here
My city gleaming on its tree-plumed levels,
And waiting in its troubled sleep — for me!

Fear not for me: I go unto the city.

[CLEONIS *clings to* ABGAR'S *neck. He, erect, the left arm holding* CLEONIS, *the right pointing to the city which is now full in the light of the risen moon.*

[*The distant noise of preparation for departure fills the garden with sound.*

IV. EVENING

An hour later.

The only light is that of the moon, which enfilades the little open spaces among the leaves and along the ground, and shines full over the open country beyond the garden.

The garden is empty of people. There are sounds of stamping hoofs, shouted orders, hurried footsteps, within the palace and beyond the wall. In the pauses of these sounds far in the distance from the direction of the city come indistinct murmurs like human cries. Presently a faint bugle-call thrice repeated. The sounds decrease.

AGAMEDE *and* CLEONIS *in the shadow of the portico.* AGAMEDE *stands with arms stretched out towards the oleanders, and is softly singing.*

AGAMEDE

Grow, grow, thou little tree,
His body at the roots of thee;

Since last year's loveliness in death
The living beauty nourisheth.

Bloom, bloom, thou little tree,
Thy roots around the heart of me;
Thou canst not blow too white and fair
From all the sweetness hidden there.

Die, die, thou little tree,
And be as all sweet things must be;
Deep where thy petals drift I, too,
Would rest the changing seasons through.

CLEONIS

Let us sit here and wait for Uchomo.

[*They sit on the steps of the portico.*

These last strange quiet moments spent with thee
Have wrought some change in me, I know not what.
Whereas I was half-girl, this day of storm,
O woman of sorrow, hath made me calm as thou;
Hath shown me heights and deeps, and swallowed up
All fear of death or life. We are secure.

AGAMEDE

Not in an hour was wrought this change in thee.
Thyself hast wrought it day by day in toil
For what thou lovest, forgetting what thou art.
These final moments show thyself to thee.

CLEONIS

Thou hast known all these things for many years.

[*Enter* ABGAR, *armed, wearing his golden helmet.*

[*He bends over* CLEONIS, *who arises and joins him. They descend to the garden.*

[AGAMEDE *remains on the steps a moment, her hands extended as in blessing towards the receding pair, then steals into the palace.*

ABGAR

Dost thou, love, feel a strange, new sense of peace?
To me it is as if another air
Had suddenly enveloped our sad earth.

CLEONIS

The atmosphere of oceans tranquillized.

ABGAR

Wherein our barque doth move on steadily
As by some other force than chance of winds.

CLEONIS

In the old days when far we searched the seas
In our light-skimming pinnace, thou and I,
Sometimes it bended in and out the isles
And no wind seemed to have the care of it.
Then thought I, like a foolish, dreaming girl,
That beautiful, strong hands beneath us bore
Our barque of love.
We have lived inland long.

ABGAR

To me there is no inland, having thee!
Our love's a golden sea set thick with green
And aromatic islands whose shores know

Such wreckage only as bright, tide-plucked flowers
That grow, unguessed, too deep for touch of storm.

Come to our garden-seat. The moment nears
When we must for a little while be parted.

[*They mount the dais and sit.*

[*A pause, during which the murmur from the city is renewed.*

He said that shortly all should be made clear.
I think his words grow plainer to me, yet . . .
Is there no other way our world will learn?

CLEONIS

Only through abnegation's sacrifice;
Only renouncement, that shall raise dead hearts.

None may believe who have beheld, because
This mortal vision makes them blind of soul.
Men may not see with soul and body both:
This now I see who was till now one blind,
And under the charm of fear. The man spake well.

ABGAR

Not distance, nor yet death, shall separate
The souls of those whose vision is made clear.
Lo, he abideth with us evermore
Who would not come to us the way of flesh,
And in the spirit makes us whole.
That mind
Hath turned my course of longing utterly:
I longed for healing only of this flesh
That I might serve my state — asked not for more;
Yet how in his refusal he transcends
My widest prayer!

CLEONIS

"Of your infirmity
Shall you know yet full cure; and those have peace
Who are most dear to you."
That peace is here.

ABGAR

O love, I never saw thee till this hour

So beautiful! How all the world is changed!
Let us grow old together in this way.

CLEONIS

Always together, well or ill betide:
Promise me this, O love — till death's own hour!

ABGAR

Yea! For no ill can ever meet us so!

[*Sound of the chariot at the gate.*

CLEONIS

I have thy promise. Listen, at yon gate
Moschus is standing with the chariot.
I go with thee! Oh, never, never apart!

ABGAR

I will return to thee to-morrow, love.
Stay me not thus; the numbered moments fly.
Knowest thou not I am made strong for this?

CLEONIS (*clinging to him*)

But thou hast said ill cannot meet us so.
Together, always, even to the hour of death!

ABGAR

Yea, that I know! Come, then. Not all earth's power
Shall snatch us twain asunder. To the city!

CLEONIS

It is the promise: Peace and life abundant.

[*They descend to the ground, and are interrupted in their exit by the* BODY SLAVE, *who enters, running, from the palace.*

SLAVE

Flee, flee! Armed bands of thrice our guard's full strength
Ride here!

[*He runs centre, mounting the dais and shading his eyes towards the city.*

I see their helmets on the plain.
O King, your chariot quick! and southward turn:
Thapsacus is our ancient ally. Flee!
That friendly city may be reached in safety.
One of her trading craft lies on the river

Waiting for dawn to slip her anchorage.
Moschus and I will bear you with the Queen
Swift charioting thither.

ABGAR

To Thapsacus,
To the old, noble town where Xenophon
With the Ten Thousand crossed Euphrates' flood,
I, fleeing at night away from foes unseen?

[*He mounts the dais, his arm still encircling*

CLEONIS. *They look towards the city.*

Return thou to thy duty at the postern,
And fortify thy heart with the calm night.
The guards without are ready; we within
Are confident and undisturbed. [*Exit* SLAVE.

CLEONIS

Look, love,
How beautiful! Along that road of gold
Which in and out among the new-sown fields
Mocks with its shining course the winding river,

They sparkle like heroic panoplies,
With helmet, shield, and spear beneath the moon.

ABGAR

It is, indeed, most beautiful and strange.

[*They stand some moments in silence, facing the city and the open country, and watching the advance of the troops. Again the sullen murmur of the city. Twice or thrice* CLEONIS *lifts her hand to the scene and turns her head half round to* ABGAR.

[*The sound of galloping hoofs grows near. The horses at the gate paw and neigh. There are movements among the guard, and within the palace.*

[*A red light flares from one end of the city.*

O city! many a time and oft have I
Preserved thy peace through toil and bitter pain,
Turning away the foeman from thy gates!
Oh, I have loved with yearnings infinite
Even as a father pitieth his child!

But what can save thee from thyself? Not love.
What needest thou? What wilt thou of me more?
My life? Can that avail thee in the end?
If mortal vision make thee blind of soul
Can death — can that appease, and bring thee sight?

[*There is an onset at the gate.*

[*Enter women from the left, flying into the palace.*

FIRST WOMAN

Flee, flee!

SECOND WOMAN

There's murder at the gate!

THIRD WOMAN

Oh, flee!

[*The gate bursts open, but is still defended. The fighting is along the wall.*

[*Enter* ANANIAS *from the gate, wounded.*

ANANIAS

Where's Uchomo? Where's Cleonis? Where's my King?

We cannot hold them off. They beat us down
Like sudden whirlwinds. Oh, I think I die.

[CLEONIS *tears a strip from her robe; then, as if by a fortunate recollection, plucks the square of linen from the bosom of* ABGAR, *and binds it over the wound with the strip.*

Oh, cowardly to yield thee up a day
From my long watchful care! Oh, base to turn,
When needed most, even at thy own command!

ABGAR (*supporting him tenderly*)

Dear friend, thou art the other side the loom.
Thou canst not see what wondrous web is wrought
By this blind weaver Fate! All's well with us.

ANANIAS

Two months — two months away from thee! Indeed
There was delay — the mountain roads were rough.
But — pray, forgive me — this I spake not of:
I made not haste sufficient.

Thanks, dear Queen.
Your touch is like my Chloë's.
This, see thou —
It was among the hills of Lebanon
We met the robbers — on our homeward journey.
I had a wound of them. And even now
It breaks afresh — before Belarion's blade.
Oh . . . oh . . . forgive me, Queen, I brought not back . . .
Brought not . . . the Healer. . . . All I could . . . I did.

[*He falls, dying, into the arms of* ABGAR, *who lays him gently upon the dais at his feet.*

[*The conflict ends suddenly.*

Voice of STILBE

The gate! The gate! Edessa shall be free!

[BELARION *bursts through the gate with soldiers, in the midst of whom, borne aloft on the shoulders of slaves, enter* STILBE *clothed in white and gold, and bearing garlands.*

STILBE

Hear Ares! Spilth of Persian vintages,
And splendid altar-garlands, laurel and rose!
Thighs of a thousand bulls, great Artemis!
[*In passing, flings a garland to* ABGAR.
Thy roses I return thus, Uchomo!
[*She is borne laughing across the garden.*
Ha, but once more Edessa shall be gay!
Yet will I give command that every Spring
One night my women shall remember thee,
O Queen, with love-songs in the garden here.
[*Exit into the palace.*
[*The soldiers of* BELARION *fill the scene. Some with torches pass into the palace, as though to take possession. In the midst of them, enter the* PHYSICIAN, *in terror.*

PHYSICIAN

Drive me not thus, I say. 'Tis ill respect
To one of my position. (*Catching sight of* ABGAR.)
O dear King!

Speak not reproachfully that I did fail
To notify Antigonus and John.
I met an ancient actor on the road
Who read a trilogy of Æschylus;
And "Prove thyself the Paion of this dread,"
So ran the line, on which I, pondering, came. . . .

A Soldier (*urging him on*)

Come, thou old prattler, show us to the treasure.

[*Exeunt, into the palace.*

Belarion

The hour's come round. Here, brave guards of Edessa!
Looks he too frail to fight and live like us,
He there of the bright eye and crimson cheek?
'Tis fine life in a garden with a woman!
His creatures in the city can pull down
And build up as he bids them, spite of all
The rites and usages of gods and men!

Behold the man. What shall we do with him?

SOLDIERS

Kill him!

BELARION

Ay, kill him! But not instantly.
Let him, and her who styles herself our Queen —
The Greek wench there — let them acquit themselves.
What word, King?

[*In advancing, he stumbles over the dead body of* ANANIAS.

Ah, the old dog's licked his last!

ABGAR

No word have I for thee to pluck at, thou
Who murderest beauty, truth, and all fair things!
No word have I; but o'er that faithful man
Who gave his life to cure his King's unrest,
Have I a more than word for thee. That's death!

[*He steps forward quickly, unsheathing his blade, and strikes* BELARION *a mortal blow.*

[BELARION *falls, groaning.*

BELARION

Up there, ye cowards! See my vengeance full!

[*He dies.*

[ABGAR, *defended at the rear by the stone settle, protects himself and* CLEONIS *during an attack of the soldiers, who fall back as if in awe of his commanding front.*

[*During the pause* AGAMEDE, *in silence, forces her way through the ranks, and joins* CLEONIS *and* ABGAR *on the dais.*

CLEONIS (*pointing to the body of* ANANIAS)

"And those most dear to you have peace."

Thy blade!

[ABGAR *hesitates, then yields her his unsheathed sword. She lightly steps downward and lays it upon the body of* ANANIAS, *then returns to* ABGAR, *and they stand defenceless, facing the soldiers.*

ABGAR (*half turning towards the city, from which the red flame breaks afresh and irradiates his helmet of gold*)

Together, love, we go unto the city!

OCTAVES IN AN OXFORD GARDEN

OCTAVES IN AN OXFORD GARDEN

I

THE day is like a sabbath in a swoon. *Wadham*
Slow in September's blue go fair cloud-things
Poising aslant upon their charmèd wings,
Stilled to the last faint backward smiles of June.
Softly I tread, and with repentant shoon,
Half fearfully in sweet imaginings,
Where broods, like courtyard of departed kings,
The old Quadrangle paved with afternoon.

II

No footfall sounds within the empty hall;
No echoes people corridor and stair;
The sunlight slumbers on the silent square,
Forgetful of slow shadows by the wall.
Yon is the passage where low lights do fall
And linger longest (I have watched them there)
Beyond which you will find a spot most fair,
A comfortable and a holy spot withal.

III

There dwells the very soul of quietness,
Seclusion's spirit deep within the green,
Secure from fame as some unsung demesne
In far Ionian hills. There waits to bless,
With her all-healing, mother-soft caress,
The Sympathy of Trees, that friend unseen,
Soother of moods, on whom all hearts do lean
Sooner or later, and their cares confess.

IV

As one whose road winds upward turns his face
Unto the valleys where he late hath stood,
Leaning upon his staff in peace to brood
On many a beauty of the distant place,
So I in this cool garden pause a space,
Reviewing many things in many a mood,
Accumulating friends in solitude
From the assembly of my thoughts and days.

V

As here among the well-remembering boughs
Where every leaf is tongue to ancient breath,
Speech of the yesteryears forgathereth,
And all the winds are long-fulfillèd vows —
So from of old those ringing names arouse
A whispering in the foliate shades of death
Where History her golden rosary saith,
Glowing, the light of Memory on her brows.

VI

What hath she uttered that should make me dread —
That brown-robed Abbess with her beads soft-told
Who hath her seat upon the fragrant mould
And sees the gliding Centuries perfected?
Naught. Only good things saying, she, with head
Bowed to her task submissively, doth fold
An era by for every bead of gold,
And smileth on the glory of the Dead.

VII

Here did Wren make himself a student home
Or e'er he made a name that England loves.
I wonder, as he watched yon chapel doves
If he did have some foresight of that dome
On Lud's old Hill where now their coveys come,
With them that bear his name, in lofty coves.
I wonder if this straying shadow moves
Adown the wall as then he saw it roam.

VIII

Blake hither brought his book — to con the sky,
Commanding squadrons of the upper seas
That streamed, impatient of Time's slow degrees,
Their pennoned fleets of phantasy on high.
O wing-shod Time, that we should bid thee fly!
Five hundred years good Bishop Wykeham's trees
Down there at New have known such lads as these,
And they are patient still and standing by.

IX

Nature's Calmness

All things seem ordered sweetly in the calm,
Full measure of the even-marching years.
This elm I love hath never fought with fears
And sickening heartbreak; but the steady psalm
Of one who trusts not vainly issues from
His quiet depth — such psalm as lifts and cheers
Each tiny stalk or tender blade that rears
A nostril to the breeze-bestowèd balm.

X

Primrose, and Phlox, and Clytie (as I call
The lady Sunflower, never to forget
The faithful nymph she was — ah, yes, is yet!),
These sway unto its heartsome rise-and-fall
With ivies undulating up the wall;
And thought, to inarticulate rhythm set,
Joins harmony, while far the World's vain fret
And discord dreamwise vanish from it all.

XI

Soon will sweet Primrose be a faded crone,
  Yet seeks she now nor flattery nor fame;
  And Phlox upon the morrow lays no claim
When her shed bloom shall be around her blown.
This Beech, 'neath whom their many kindred shone
  As fair, hath ne'er heard any wish a name,
  And even he hath reckoned it no shame
To live in silence and to pass unknown.

XII

Lost Inheritance

THIS is my lost inheritance. I look
  With brotherliest affections yearning forth
  To the flower-bearing sod. Oh, what is worth
The strange estate of flesh I strangely took?
In the soft soil the garden breezes shook
  From the wall chink but now, there's measure of earth
  To match my body's dust when its re-birth
To sod restores old functions I forsook.

XIII

Vicissitude

STRANGE that a sod for just a thrill or two
Should ever be seduced into the round
Of change wherein its present state is found
In this my form! forsake its quiet, true
And fruitfullest retirement to go through
The heat, the strain, the languor, and the wound!
Forget soft rain to hear the stormier sound,
Exchange for burning tears its peaceful dew!

XIV

Old Song and a River

IT was the lip of murmuring Thames along
When new lights sought the wood all strangely fair,
Such quiet lights as saints transfigured wear
In minster windows crept the glades among.
And far as from some hazy hill, yet strong,
Methought an upland shepherd piped it there,
Rousing a silvern echo in her lair:
"*Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song.*"

XV

My Spenser lay the dewy grass upon,
  His pages shone before me as I read —
  Like the gold daisies gleaming round his bed
His lantern verses upward to me shone.
End never yet his song's rich note hath known;
  "Sweet Thames" runs softly by his burthen sped,
  And shall, while hymns are sung and prayers are said,
Low chanting his glad Prothalamion.

XVI

I NEVER thought until one night i' the dark — *The Same Sky*
  When one I love was on the labouring seas,
  How constantly the stars' white companies
Stand watch o'er all — yea, when horizons stark
Are swept of every other sign and mark
  So it were utmost desert but for these.
  (And then, I think, my spirit found its knees
And asked them to guide well my dear one's barque.)

XVII

Constancy

IT is the same sky over sea and land:
The same pure stars attend great London town
That tremble where the Channel thunders down;
'Tis we that vary, running on the strand.
Life bounds no fresher from the eternal hand
Here in the Wadham branches than out yon
Where blurs the dusty highway wide and wan:
Good is within all, having all things planned.

XVIII

Ford Madox Brown's "Christ washing the Feet of Peter"

THERE is a picture—you have seen it oft:
The Master at unwilling Peter's feet
Ennobling evermore and making sweet
Each humble service wrought with mind aloft.
Such mystic splendour shines serene and soft
('Twas dreamt out through long years and made complete

From visions ripe) that, turning thence, we greet
A new world, where dull conscious self is dofft.

XIX

The Absence

HE who this limned is gone. They treasure still
The wooden wafer once he loved to hold
Which (can we question?) now his hand is mould
Yearns ever for his touch of tender skill.
This ochre, longs it not to meet his will
About the head of Jesus aureoled?
And that sad patch of umber some slight fold
Of Peter's garment would so gladly fill!

XX

Even so our fancies' colours, keen of yore,
When one we love lays by this earth-constraint,
Upon our palettes do wax dull and faint,
Fulfilling not commissions first they bore.
For he is gone, and never holy lore
Nor shining nimbus of transfigured saint

May anywhere the fragment ochre paint;
And the rich umber waits for evermore.

XXI

ONE time from that grey close I did emerge *St. Paul's*
Wherethrough I had been toiling, and to me,
Like some benignant rock above the sea,
St. Paul's great brow above the mist and surge
Loomed kindly, and methought did kindly urge
All men up to it, till there came to be
A hush on hearts, a deep tranquillity
Of healing virtue, round the minster's verge.

XXII

Thus Friendship. As a sacred citadel
Above the hurrying crowd of men it towers;
There in or sun or frost, or shine or showers,
Invites to worship with no beating bell.
This world's a city, and it loves full well
The mid-street sanctuary that is ours

Whither to steal away renewing powers
Whose sources only at that Altar dwell.

XXIII

Dust of Eden

SOME dust of Eden eddies round us yet.
Some clay o' the Garden, clinging in the breast,
Down near the heart yet bides unmanifest.
Last eve in gardens strange to me I let
The path lead far; and, lo, my vision met
Old, forfeit hopes. I, as on homeward quest,
By recognizing trees was bidden rest,
And pitying leaves looked down and sighed, "Forget."

XXIV

Restoration

To one tired heart I said: If it be true
That, in the sad much-winding of your ways,
Your thread is broken out of other days,
And you know not what joy is lost to you,
I pray you, turn aside awhile and through

This quiet garden think on some old place
Dear to the child you were, and that loved face
That once in many a labyrinth was your clew.

XXV

Roman Glassware preserved in the Ashmolean

FAIR crystal cups are dug from earth's old crust,
Shattered but lovely; for, at price of all
Their shameful exile from the banquet-hall,
They have been bargaining beauties from the dust.
So, dig my life but deep enough, you must
Find broken friendships round its inner wall —
Which once my careless hand let slip and fall —
Brave with faint memories, rich in rainbow-rust.

XXVI

Life's Usurpation

TELL them, sweet evening breeze poised here, no less
I love their memory whom thou goest to greet
Out there at heaven's gate, but that I meet

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Less oft the idle thoughts of old distress.
Tell them the thought of them still lives to bless,
  But since I learned how much, despite defeat,
  My life demands that I shall make complete,
I must yield up my cherished loneliness.

XXVII

Traces

SOMETHING of sorrow am I not denied, —
  Share of the earth's old, universal pain
  I own, — though but as hillsides own the rain,
Or solid sands the long wave's stroking side.
Still, though no rains upon the steep may bide,
  And harmlessly the sea-floods rise and wane,
  The downward torrent-traces do remain,
And sands bear record of the sedulous tide.

XXVIII

The One Flower

BEFORE an inn hearth's tale-begetting flame,
  Or sooth, or fable, yielded of the store
  A white old man from perilous country bore,
I heard of a strange tree without a name

Whose shade the brinks of fuming gulfs did claim
And the precipitous torrents of that shore.
Beauteous and straight it was, and uniflore
With purest bud that e'er to blossom came.

XXIX

As those great petals burst asunder there
A wondrous fragrance on the breeze was fanned,
Solace unique of that unfriendly land
Wafted remote along the treasuring air.
But then, the old man said with trembling care,
A little raising his blue, withered hand,
"The flower droops straightway ere it doth expand,
And never another bloom that tree may bear."

XXX

Oh, sometimes, in the years since then, I too
Through dangerous and deserted lands have wended,
And many a stark and chasmy steep descended
Which crumbling cataracts shed their vapour through.
But where such lone, mysterious blossom grew

I have not sought to learn, by one more splendid
Along the dimmest verges close attended —
The all-enfolding, deathless love of you!

XXXI

EARLY at eve on Onchan Head, because *Separation*
The crimson lustre was upon the bay,
And much bright melody began to sway
Upward from gay pavilions, and there was
None there to speak with in the music's pause,
I sickened of the glory and turned away.
Oh, that red sun had sealed a perfect day
Had I but heard your low, sweet laugh's applause!

XXXII

He is no lover of the sea who loses
Sound of her voices, inland wandering.
Still should her old melodious mystery spring
Around him, wend he wheresoe'er he chooses;
And so within me rhythmic life refuses

By any other pulse than yours to swing,
Far from your friendship's ocean though I sing
Where the hills tire and the rough pathway bruises.

XXXIII

A great nelumbo heavy on the breast
Of heaven's tranquil lake must be the moon
Above this garden in the still night's noon
Bending the gold of her refulgent crest.
Thus to the surface of these days of rest
Through all my absent idlesse, late and soon,
The thought of you doth blossom and the boon
Of the dear face that waits me down the West.

SONNETS

SONNETS

LIFE'S TAVERN

NIGHT-REFUGE, set aloft this travelled hill,
'Tis deemed by many a lodger but an inn;
Others look round them better and scarce fill
Their first cup ere its mystery doth begin,
And they are led by some divine desire
Where, midmost of an inner room, there bends
Clear flame on golden altar, to which fire
A wide-eyed vestal changelessly attends.
And most, so led, have joy to serve that light
And with the jealous priestess vigil keep;
But woe to any wearying neophyte,
And woe to him who serves with eyes of sleep:
To such is she more bitter than to those
On whom, unlit, her doors forever close!

SULTAN'S BREAD

REMOTE behind the Sultan's palace wall
That silent rises out of teeming Fez,
A foreign guest, who oft broke bread there, says
One day at food a morsel was let fall;
And Abd-ul, keen of eye, did gently call
Devout slaves to restore the slighted shred —
So prized in his religion is mere bread
To the great lord of that imperial hall.
Up to the table of this life we sit,
With sultan some, and some with tribesman placed.
The fare is wheat or barley on our plate,
And as we break the brittle loaf of it
'Tis well to think what fragments we do waste
Which our companions may deem consecrate.

FAILURES

THEY bear no laurels on their sunless brows,
Nor aught within their pale hands as they go;
They look as men accustomed to the slow
And level onward course 'neath drooping boughs.
Who may these be no trumpet doth arouse,
These of the dark processionals of woe,
Unpraised, unblamed, but whom sad Acheron's flow
Monotonously lulls to leaden drowse?
These are the Failures. Clutched by circumstance,
They were — say not too weak! — too ready prey
To their own fear, whose fixèd gorgon glance
Made them as stone for aught of great essay; —
Or else they nodded when their Master-Chance
Wound his one signal, and went on his way.

"AND WOMEN MUST WEEP"

I HEARD a woman sobbing in the night
Against a casement high. And, as she cried,
Our heartless world's deliberate homicide,
Our tragic badinage, our mortal slight
Of primal claims, and the remorseless plight
Of the poor I faced there, rigid, open-eyed.
Across the unechoing street in silence died
Her weary moaning: Whether in her sight
Some star appeared to soothe her present pain
With memories sweet, or quiet sleep's strong hand
Blunted her keen-edged woe, or other fear
Came smothering down too close for sob or tear,
I could not guess; — some Fate may understand
That spins unseen her endless umber skein.

III

GOLDEN ROD

DOUBTLESS 'twas here we walked but yesterday,
Seeing not any beauty save the green
Of meadows, or, where slipt the brook between,
A ribbon of blue and silver; yet the way
Is strange: in golden paths I seem astray.
Do you remember, comrade, to have seen
Aught forward in these meadows that should mean
A culmination in such fair display?
We noticed not the humble stalks amid
The many roadside grasses; but, it seems,
They were preparing this! And, when their dreams
Were ripe for doing, they could no more be hid
Than golden thoughts that bloom to action when
Their hearts make heroes out of common men.

OCTOBER

THE maples their old sumptuous hues resume
  Around the woodland pool's bright glass, and strong
  The year's blue incense and recession-song
Sweep over me their music and perfume.
Dear Earth, that I reproached thee in my gloom
  I would forget, as thou forgott'st; I long
  To make redress for such a filial wrong
And praise thee now for all thy ruddy bloom!
So fond a mother to be used so ill!
  Yet this poor heart of mine hath ever been
    Prey to its own unwarranted alarms —
Shall fret, and beg forgiveness so, until
  Thou fold my thankless body warmly in,
    And draw me back into thy loving arms.

WITH A COPY OF THE MONA LISA

'Tis said of Mona Lisa, that those years
  She gave us that we might behold her face
  In all its indefinable rare grace,
As on the immortal canvas it appears, —
'Tis said those were from trouble, and from tears,
  Exempted years; and that, all through the place
  Where Leonardo painted her, the days
Found ever scents that charm, and sound that cheers.
Dear one, no Leonardo paints thy smile;
  Few flowers, and little music, oft there be
  To charm away the world's anxiety;
Yet, oh, thy patient face hath all the while
  A more mysterious loveliness than stirs
  The heart of him who hath seen only hers!

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THE REZZONICO PALACE

("*A Roberto Browning, morto in questo palazzo*")

Low stars and moonlight beauty disavow
That death has ever known her; but around
Her melancholy portals only sound
Of waters makes her music; and the brow
Of stately wall records the legend how
"Died in this palace" a poet Love once crowned.
Here the cold Angel that strong harp unbound:
How chill and silent seem her chambers now!
O World, if ever moon should wander here
Where builds my heart its palace for your song,
And find such tablet in the outer wall,
The poet dead, the chambers still and drear,
Let not its hollow beauty win the throng
To reverence, but let it perish all!

"EX LIBRIS"

In an old book at even as I read
Fast fading words adown my shadowy page,
I crossed a tale of how, in other age,
At Arqua, with his books around him, sped
The word to Petrarch; and with noble head
Bowed gently o'er his volume that sweet sage
To Silence paid his willing seigniorage.
And they who found him whispered, "He is dead!"
Thus timely from old comradeships would I
To Silence also rise. Let there be night,
Stillness, and only these staid watchers by,
And no light shine save my low study light —
Lest of his kind intent some human cry
Interpret not the Messenger aright.

MOTHERS AND SISTERS

MOTHERS and sisters, whom no sacrifice
  Dismays, nor whom your long, laborious hours
  Do anywise appall, ye are the powers
By whom the swift are girded for the prize
They reach in the light of your believing eyes.
  Ye are the hidden oil the shrine devours —
  Soil of the garden whence the great rose flowers —
The silent force that bids a star arise.
Ye ask of men nor honour, nor regret,
  Nor memory, save one's whose love is all.
Renouncement? Living daily the divine!
  Effacement? Still the world your names shall call:
Monica was the mother of Augustine;
Pascal had Jacqueline — Renan, Henriette!

AFTER READING "THE GOLDEN TREASURY" IN GREEN PARK

Off Piccadilly with its pavement cries,
  Its maddening monotone of wheel and hoof,
Here in Green Park primeval summer lies,
  How near, how yearning, yet how far aloof!
O city, symbol of a world that still
  Heedless of beauty under heaven rolls;
And thou, blithe meadow all with larks a-thrill
  Like poetry, that pasture of great souls —
Ye twain so sundered shall forever dwell,
  A tumult and a blessing side by side:
Here, as to toil-worn Argo once befell
  A singing island on a thundering tide,
Where men might stretch them out in glad release,
We too, much-wandering, hail this hour of peace!

TO GEORGE CRABBE

Dusk falls, and through the deepening silence where
  Red afterglows yon ashen roof do paint
Whose dormer children's tapers gild so fair,
  Far vesper chimes disperse their music faint.
Beneath an ancient arch the river turns
  Full of his inexpressive melody:
With tenderest longing my whole being yearns
  To set his old, imprisoned story free!
Unto this gloaming world, thou, Spirit sweet,
  With me art come; thou art of village things
A low-voiced, love-enfolding paraclete
  Who soothest all their sleepy murmurings,
And lurest from river, chime, and thatchen stead
Tales of the inarticulate, and the dead.

THOUGHT OF STEVENSON

HIGH and alone I stood on Calton Hill
Above the scene that was so dear to him
Whose exile dreams of it made exile dim.
October wooed the folded valleys till
In mist they blurred, even as our eyes upfill
Under a too sweet memory; spires did swim,
And gables rust-red, on the grey sea's brim —
But on these heights the air was soft and still.
Yet not all still: an alien breeze will turn
Here as from bournes in aromatic seas,
As round old shrines a new-freed soul might yearn
With incense of rich earthly reveries.
Vanish the isles: Mist, exile, searching pain,
But the brave soul is free, is home again!

BONINGTON (1801–1828)

WHO mourns his life was brief? He who forgets
Work is the master's measure, and not years!
There on his sands that trailed their Norman nets,
Far from the fluctuant city's joys and fears,
Or in the long Louvre's golden-glorious streets,
Prodigious in accomplishment he dwelled:
A Chatterton of fancies, colour's Keats,
Swift visitant, by other worlds compelled!
Much beauty had this boy to leave on earth;
Grieve not, for he did leave it, hurrying hence
To some more radiant art, some starred rebirth
Where Truth most needed his soul's eloquence,
And where he toils those stately minds among
Who dare glance backward smiling, and with song.

BENJAMIN-CONSTANT'S PORTRAIT OF QUEEN VICTORIA

Apart, with centuries which she doth illume,
The sunset on her face, around her throne
Tapestried legends and heraldic stone,
Silent she sits within that gorgeous gloom.
Eyes narrowed in far retrospect assume
Sorrows of empire. Not her dream alone
Occident glories, Orients homage-prone,
But more and more of Lucknow and Khartum.
Along the past with heavy-lidded eyes
She looks as one who knows the vision well,
A quiet woman whom stately powers compel
To splendour, and to silent sacrifice —
For in the clare-obscure of her deep years
What counter of gains hath likewise told her tears?

ORPAH

My heart is with thee, Orpah! Meekly thou
  Out of the tender chronicle dost wend
  Back, lonely, unto Moab. Wordless friend,
By those great tears, and that averted brow,
(If anywhere thy loving spirit now
  My backward-turning heart's long cry attend!)
  I swear to thee soul-homage to the end,
And speed thee my allegiance in one vow:
"Silently I from out Love's chronicle
  Will wend alone: of me is little need.
    Silently will I go, and leave her this
Sweet other friend, whose passion words can tell."
  — O Orpah, know that thou art blest indeed,
    For *thou* couldst weep — *thou* hadst Naomi's kiss!

A MOTIVE OUT OF LOHENGRIN

UNEARTHLY beauty of soft light persuadeth
  This castle which to shadows did belong;
  And through its farthest vaults sweet mellow song
The silence of my wintry halls upbraideth;
Gently as saffron dawn that smiling fadeth
  The sable, yielding hours, these search along;
  And with them, souls of roses dead — faint throng
Of odours of old years that all-pervadeth.
Lady, this thing I speak not — do not fear it.
  'Twere more than friendship, yet no better name
  Dares my most grateful heart's allegiance claim
Lest this, as I do think, be brother-spirit
  To him, swan-brought to Brabant's castled shore,
  Who, named aloud, was lost for evermore.

THE MYSTERY OF BEAUTY

I

For whom is Beauty? Where no eyes attend
As richly goes the day; and every dawn
Reddens along green rivers whereupon
None ever gaze. Think, could earth see an end
Of all the twilight lovers whose thoughts blend
With scents of garden blooms they call their own,
Would not as close the yellowest rose outblown
Be, after them, the unmurmurous evening's friend?
Then wherefore Beauty, if in mortal eye
That loves them stars no challenge read to shine,
And all the wonder of a sunset sky
Wax not more wondrous for such smile as thine?
Why, pray, if not for Love which cannot die —
This old earth-loving Love of thine and mine!

II

When we two from our Summer hills have passed,
  And Autumn burns beneath thy praise no more,
  Nor any Winter's raving at our door
Shuts each within the other's heart more fast;
Neither Spring's roses learn what lips thou hast —
  Oh, then this thing called Beauty to its core
  Our wedded souls shall penetrate before
One thought unto Eternity is cast!
Then shall we know the violet's pretext; learn
  More definite a promise of the rose,
And its fulfilment; when the maples turn,
  Be part of all the glory among those;
Or help the May with her uncoiling fern,
  And breathe the trillium open where it grows!

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CONSUMMATION

As the clear fountain sparkles on the hill
  In some flowered basin, at a cool, sweet height,
  Yet comes from we guess not what galleried night,
Devious, untraced, and altogether ill, —
So doth my love from other days distil,
  Through channels occult groping up to light,
  Deeming all labours past as thrice requite
If once thou stoop thy hollowed hand to fill.
Clear eyes that bend upon my love thou hast,
  And I would have them cloudless of dismay:
I thank the chastenings of that cryptic past
  Where those soiled waters crept their stains away, —
Those slandered days, whose riddle, now, at last,
  Grows plain before this fair and final day.

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

(*The first celebration in the new century*)

EARTH, that hast countless aeons of swift days
  Spun from thy poles — and like a mote been swirled
  Fleet years about thy Master Orb — and hurled
With all thy starry fellows into space,
Silent and irresistible on the face
  Of heavens, and of heavens' heavens unfurled —
  And yet remainest our remembering world,
Our kindly home, and our familiar place, —
Thou dost not fail, sweet, immemorial Earth,
  To number o'er thy sons that were thy kings;
  Chants royal raisest thou among the rings
Celestial of old stars for their great worth
Whose birth was not as is our common birth,
  But was foreplanned with elemental things.

ARLINGTON

No tap of drum, nor sound of any horn,
Shall call them now from this unbattled height;
No more the picket dreads the traitor night,
Nor would the marcher tired delay the morn.
Fell some upon the field with victory torn
From weakening grasp; and some before the fight,
Doomed by slow fevers or the stray shot's spite;
And some old wounds through quiet years have worn.
And all are folded now so peacefully
Within her breast whose glory was their dream —
From her own bloody fields, from isles extreme,
From the long tumult of the land and sea —
Where lies the steel Potomac's jewelled stream
Like the surrendered sword of Memory.

THE SEQUOIA, "WILLIAM McKINLEY"

(*Christened October* 21, 1901, *Mariposa County, California*)

He who in dying blessed the peaceful trees
That lulled the slow grief of the lapsing year
Towards tranquil death, is best remembered here.
He leaves a name that shall make holier these
Huge temple pillars where the organing breeze,
Always at requiem, fills the atmosphere,
And does to their eternal roof uprear
Perpetual music of great memories.
Men raised rich temples in the days antique
To serve memorial unto virtues wan
Beside his. Him no rites shall celebrate
Gold-bought, ephemeral as their altar-reek —
But, while time is, he here in solemn state
Shall hold fit place in Nature's pantheon.

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WHEAT ELEVATORS

(*Minnesota*)

CASTLES, or Titans' houses, or huge fanes
Of ancient gods that yet compel men's fear —
What powers, what pomps, do these betoken here
Looming aloft upon the plough-seamed plains?
Souls of ripe seasons and spirits of sweet rains
Flock hither; and the sinewy, yellow year
Heaps their high chambers with Pactolian gear
More precious than those golden Lydian grains.
Nor fortresses, nor demi-gods' abodes,
These are upraised to well-feared deities
Whose power is iron, and whose splendid sway
Is undisputed now as when great Rhodes,
And Tyre, and Carthage, flourished serving these,
Or Joseph stored Egyptian corn away.

THE COAL BREAKER

(*Pennsylvania*)

THIS is the house where, up from ages gone,
Huge forests, root and leaf and bough and bole,
With every bend of breeze and tempest-roll
Preserved in crystal from earth's distant dawn,
Again to light laboriously are drawn.
No continent's tumultuous throes control
Their phalanx more: they are black seams of coal
And are upheaved by human will and brawn.
But see, here in this ogre's castle weaves
A magic power to make those forests glad
And charm away their thousand ages' sleep,
For more than all the beauty once they had
Returns, with song of bird and rush of leaves,
In the bright waving hearth-fire calm and deep.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(*New York Harbour, A. D. 2900*)

HERE once, the records show, a land whose pride
Abode in Freedom's watchword! And once here
The port of traffic for a hemisphere,
With great gold-piling cities at her side!
Tradition says, superbly once did bide
Their sculptured goddess on an island near,
With hospitable smile and torch kept clear
For all wild hordes that sought her o'er the tide.
'Twas centuries ago. But this is true:
Late the fond tyrant who misrules our land,
Bidding his serfs dig deep in marshes old,
Trembled, not knowing wherefore, as they drew
From out this swampy bed of ancient mould
A shattered torch held in a mighty hand.

NOTE

Eusebius Pamphili, the fourth-century church historian, cites the public archives of the City of Edessa as authority for the story of Abgar's appeal to Jesus. He relates that Ananias was sent to Jerusalem with the following letter: —

"Abgarus, King of Edessa, to Jesus the good saviour, who appears at Jerusalem, greeting.

"I have been informed concerning you and your cures, which are performed without the use of medicines and herbs. For it is reported that you cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, do both cleanse lepers, and cast out unclean spirits and devils, and restore them to health, who have been long diseased, and raisest up the dead; all which when I heard, I was persuaded of one of these two, namely, either that you are God himself descended from heaven, who do these things, or the son of God.

"On this account therefore I have wrote to you, earnestly to desire you would take the trouble of a journey hither, and cure a certain disease which I am under. For I hear the Jews ridicule you, and intend you mischief. My city is indeed small, but neat, and large enough for us both."

A paraphrase of the reply of Jesus occurs in the drama in this volume. The promise of cure at the end of this reply is more definite as recorded by Eusebius; but since the subsequent fate of the king is obscure, no detailed tradition is violated in the present working out of the story.

There is also a tradition that the napkin of Veronica (or Berenice) came into the possession of Abgar, it having thence gone through many hands to its present resting-place at Rome. In the drama advantage has been taken of this legend to work out the fulfilment of the healer's promise. To complete the harmony of the story, it only needs to assume the identity of Ananias and his retinue with the "Greeks" alluded to in the twelfth chapter of John's Gospel: —

> "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'
>
> "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying: —
>
> "'The hour is come that the son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.'"

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